

Commissioner's Corner

Digital Dialogues: Improving the Way We Work and Interact



DHR is the largest agency in state government. Our 19,000 staff are located throughout the state. How do we communicate with each other and build a sense of community?

We have tried a number of ways to communicate in the past and now there are new ways for us to interact with each other and share information.

I have communicated our values and moral imperative to you in face-to-face meetings. I have spoken to the folks who do the work in each division — in all parts of the state.

I listen to front line staff and their supervisors and, in fact, I like to call folks unannounced when I can. We also use e-mails and the internet to get messages out to everyone.

As you can see from the article in this issue on the employee intranet, we are working on new ways for you to talk to me and to each other. The “I Hear You” feature gets your suggestions and issues directly to me. The content on the intranet is posted by the folks that work in your program — it's for you and by you.

A new feature on the intranet, the Weblog, or “blog,” deserves special mention because it is a unique place where staff can share ideas and exchange information. The blog will address important topics that cut across organizational lines — topics that will get us talking to each other.

Let me give you an example of how we can make use of the Weblog. Governor Perdue has launched a customer service initiative. He told us, “Georgia will have the best customer service of any state in America.” The Governor wants service to be friendlier and more customer-focused. He wants service to be faster and easier. We are asked to simplify and improve every contact with our customers, and make each encounter with a customer an opportunity, not an interruption. “Good enough for government work” isn't good enough any more.

We can agree with the Governor's goal of quality, friendly customer service, but what does it look like? How do we do it? Many of you work directly with our customers. Your ideas on how we get friendlier, faster and easier are the ideas that need to be heard and acted on. Sharing ideas on topics like customer service, a topic that is vital to our mission and nearly universal, is what the new Weblog is for.

I hope you all will take advantage of the opportunities to interact with one another on the employee intranet. Information and understanding will help us be the agency we want to be.

CONTENTS

Inside DHR.....	pg. 2
Birth of the blog..	pg. 2
Medicare D may be in your future.....	pg. 3
Welfare to work	pg. 3
Photography Gallery with a Heart.....	pg. 4
Picturing our world.....	pg. 5-7
Star Staff honored	pg. 8
State Ombudsman sings.....	pg. 10
DHR wins awards for giving	pg. 11
Who's News	pg. 11
What's News	pg. 12-13

Inside DHR: For Employees, By Employees

Barbara Joye and the Inside DHR team

"Inside DHR," our new "intranet," is up and running. In April an email message told you how to get your password and sign on. Make sure you're acquainted with this great new tool.

So what is an intranet? It's a Website designed just for people inside an organization. The intERnet is the World Wide Web, but an intRAnet is an internal network, usually requiring a password to enter. Part of the DHR intranet is tailored to — and created by — people in the program where you work, while some relates to the department as a whole. The State of Georgia also has a new intranet for all state employees (see article in the previous *Human Side*) but the DHR intranet focuses on our department's unique needs.

"The employee intranet gives us new ways to communicate and share information," says Office of Communications Director and DHR Press Secretary **Dena Smith**. "It also gives us a way, in the largest state agency in Georgia, to feel more like a community. New features like our blog provide employees a chance to engage one another in an ongoing conversation. We're hoping DHR employees make it their own. I'm looking forward to seeing our intranet grow as we find creative new ways to use it."

"Inside DHR" was created through a collaboration



Cathy Whitelaw of the Office of Information Technology views the intranet she helped create.

between the Office of Communications (OC), the Office of Human Resource Management and Development (OHRMD), and the Office of Information Technology (OIT). Intranet work group members were **Angel Rodriguez**, **Yen Tang** and **Jamell Simon** (OC); **Anne McGowan** (OHRMD); and **Cathy Whitelaw**, **Mark Gallagher**, **Eric Sanders**, **Steve Reagan**, and **Lal Prasad** (OIT).

An "employee intranet" link was on the DHR home page for some time, but it led to a limited amount of information and was open to the public. The new intranet includes pages for all divisions and offices and will expand whenever program staff add documents and features. One or more "content providers" in each division and office will be trained on how to post to the intranet.

Our new intranet has lots of bells and whistles, and it will constantly be updated. The home page highlights messages from the Commissioner and news of special importance to DHR employees. It also links to features designed for employee use such as the "I Hear You" suggestion page that's answered by the Commissioner's office and the DHR Bulletin Board where we sell MARTA cards and send other non-work related announcements.

Many of the intranet features are interactive or personalized. For example, there is a DHR employee directory designed so you can update

Birth of the Blog

The new DHR employee intranet Website now has an even newer feature, a blog.

A blog, or Weblog, is an on-going dialogue on one or more topics, or postings, in the form of a journal. Anyone can add a comment to a blog entry. The idea is to share your thoughts with your DHR co-workers throughout Georgia.

"I really feel that communication is vital to any organization," said DHR Commissioner B. J. Walker, "especially one that is as large as ours. I encourage you to visit and use your employee intranet and to participate in the Weblog."

The first blog posting is about the blog itself. What topics would you like to see posted on the DHR employee blog? There is a link to submit a blog topic, if you like.

To find the DHR blog, you log into the employee intranet at <https://intranet.dhr.state.ga.us/ICSLogin/>. After you sign in using your full email address and network password, click on "Blog" on the right side of the menu bar. Happy blogging!

Continued on Page 10



Medicare Part D may be in your future

Edna Jackson

The initial enrolment deadline has passed for the new Medicare Part D Prescription Drug Benefit, and if you are under 65 years old you are probably glad you didn't have to sort through all the information. However, as you near age 65, you will need to make choices about your Medicare coverage and prescription plan.

Enrolling in Medicare will depend on your individual circumstance. Part A is for hospitalization; Part B is for doctors' visits. Part D is for prescription drug coverage. You will receive Part A automatically if you have worked and paid into the system through FICA. Some people will be automatically enrolled into Part B. This includes those who are entitled to Social Security disability benefits and those who elected to begin



Staff and volunteers from the Division of Aging Services, Atlanta Regional Commission, AARP Georgia and the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services responded to 447 calls from consumers during the Georgia Public Broadcasting Georgia Weekly episode on Medicare Part D to help enroll beneficiaries in the Medicare Prescription Drug Benefit Plan.

receiving Social Security retirement income at age 62. Beneficiaries in these two groups will receive notification from the Social Security Administration (SSA) about three months before turning 65.

Those people who are about to turn 65 but are not yet receiving Social Security should contact the SSA to sign up for their retirement benefit. At that time, you will have a choice of signing up for Medicare Parts B and D. You enroll in Part B through the SSA, and in Part D through a Medicare-approved plan that you choose based on your current medications. You will receive a "discount" on your State Health Benefit Plan (SHBP) monthly premium for each part of Medicare you take. You must enroll in Part B and Part D or pay a surcharge on your SHBP premium.

If you are not covered under SHBP, then you should enroll in B and D within three months after you turn 65 to avoid a penalty paid to Medicare. If you choose to continue working after age 65 and you are employed by a company that employs more than 20 people, you can delay enrolling in B and D. When you do decide to stop working, you can go back and pick up Parts B and D without a penalty.

Currently, there are 82 prescription drug plans in Georgia. Of these, 42 are stand-alone (prescription coverage only) and 40 are Medicare Advantage plans. The Medicare Advantage plan includes Medicare Parts A, B, and D. Medicare Advantage plans can be an HMO, a PPO (Preferred Provider Organization) or a private fee-for-service plan.

For more information, contact GeorgiaCares at 1-800-669-8387, the Social Security Administration at 1-800-772-1213 or online at www.ssa.gov, or Medicare at 1-800-MEDICARE (1-800-633-4227) or online at www.medicare.gov.

Welfare to Work is Working

Ari Young

As of March 2006, 28 Georgia counties reported zero Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) cases for adults with mandatory work requirements, the highest number to date. Those counties include: Appling, Atkinson, Bacon, Ben Hill, Berrien, Brooks, Candler, Catoosa, Clinch, Coffee, Colquitt, Dade, Early, Echols, Gilmer, Heard, Irwin, McIntosh, Murray, Oglethorpe, Seminole, Taliaferro, Terrell, Thomas, Towns, Turner, Wheeler, and Whitfield. A year ago only two counties in the state could make this claim.

- Of all Georgia's 159 counties, nearly half (45%) have fewer than 10 cases with adults who must meet a work requirement.
- Georgia ranks #1 among the states for the rate at which it is moving TANF recipients into the workplace.
- Presently, over 60% of adults receiving TANF are fulfilling their work requirement, twice as many as last year. In 18 Georgia counties, 100% of TANF recipients are fulfilling their work requirement.
- Georgia also ranks #1 for the rate at which earnings have improved for TANF recipients.

These developments highlight the dramatic improvements achieved by the Division of Family and Children Services

Continued on Page 4



Welfare to Work is Working Continued

(DFCS) over the past decade. In 1997 — as the old welfare program, Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC), gave way to TANF — there were 83,277 adult welfare cases in Georgia. Today that number has been reduced to 8,161 adult cases, representing a 90% decline. In the past two years that progress has accelerated, as we have focused our efforts on working more closely with clients and providing the resources they need to transition from welfare to work.

DFCS is working harder than ever to move families from welfare to work. Our staff is energized and motivated by the reality that welfare is not good enough for any family, or any child. We are working to achieve that reality through hands-on case management and constant supervision. Those TANF recipients who have entered the workplace benefit from greater self-sufficiency and higher earnings. This valuable work experience serves as a jumping off point for families as they transition from the welfare rolls to employment.

Just last fall, the State of Georgia was awarded a High Performance Bonus Award from the US Department of Health and Human Services. This award is given for annual achievements aimed at strengthening families by boosting employment among welfare recipients. The award, totaling over \$4 million, has been used to support services that help families overcome barriers to employment and independence.

All of us in Georgia benefit as we lessen dependency on the state while helping to strengthen the family. We have not only benefited families through our efforts, we have also reduced the number of families returning to the welfare rolls. We understand the difficulties some families face, and that is why DFCS has developed strategies to help clients find stable employment and increased earnings. We are providing job training and education to make sure recipients receive the work skills they need to become self-sufficient. DFCS has shifted its emphasis from approving and distributing assistance to work training and employment.

A Photography Gallery with a Heart

Ari Young

DHR is teaming up with Gift for a Child to promote and encourage adoptions in this state by launching the Heart Gallery Georgia. Gift for a Child is an organization that works with social service agencies across the country to promote adoptions and educate the community concerning the urgent need for foster and adoptive families. The Heart Gallery works with professional photographers who donate their skills by photographing children available for adoption. The pictures are



(L to R) Volunteer photographer Pam Robertson, two of Georgia's foster children waiting for adoption, Fulton County DFCS caseworker **Barbara Carter** and writer Rhonda Geraci take a break from a Georgia Heart Gallery photo session.

then exhibited in various cities to encourage people to become adoptive parents.

The Heart Gallery Georgia exhibit opened in Atlanta May 23 in the King and Queen buildings at the Concourse office complex near Perimeter Mall. The exhibit included 50 portraits of Georgia's waiting children and will be on display till the middle of June. On June 9 they exhibited at Atlanta's Fox Theater during the Division of Family and Children Services' Celebration of Excellence for children in foster care who have completed high school, vocational school, college or who have earned their GED. Other exhibits are being organized throughout Georgia starting this spring. For more information as it becomes available see <http://www.giftforachild.org> (click on "Calendar of Events") or email info@giftforachild.org.

In Georgia the need for foster and adoptive parents is great. Foster parents are needed not only for newborns and toddlers, but also for teens, sibling groups, and children who have special needs (physical and/or emotional).

Hundreds of children in Georgia are seeking adoptive homes. They are typically 8 years old or older, African American, and/or a member of a sibling group. Though there are many adoption success stories, many other Georgia children will spend their childhood without the guidance and security of having a home of their own. Permanent loving families are needed for our waiting children. Through collaboration with Gift for a Child and the Heart Gallery, DHR hopes to reduce the number of children needing adoptive homes in Georgia.



PICTURING OUR WORLD

Special Photography Issue

Photography is a wonderful way to share our unique vision and our favorite images of the people, places and events that have meaning for us. More and more Americans use cameras these days, and pictures are said to convey more than words. For those reasons we decided to open the pages of the Spring 2006 *Human Side* to photography by DHR employees.

The response was tremendous. Fifty-six of you from all divisions and offices throughout the state sent in 89 photos. So many were of high quality that after we selected (with difficulty) a few pages' worth to feature in the newsletter we decided to let readers view all of the entries. To see the others, go to the intranet at <https://intranet.dhr.state.ga.us/ICSLogin/> and click on "Your contest photos."

These photos show what we love most: our children, our pets, nature — and the places where we spend our vacations. Some entries show work-related scenes (though few of us bring our cameras to work). Some are unusual images, such as bagpipers parading in support of our troops in Iraq; an old stone angel at Oakland cemetery in Atlanta; and an acrobat being transferred from a helicopter onto a plane in mid-air. Many shots of subject matter such as children and flowers show a special take on a familiar image. All of them deserve more than a passing glance. We hope you enjoy them.

Special thanks to everyone who sent in photos.

— The Human Side editors



Tracie Al'Belar, training coordinator, MHDDAD
"Our 3-year-old daughter Aaliyah seeing snow for the first time."



Abigail Butler, FICM 1, Eligibility Unit, Troup County DFCS
"Lizard on a daylily."

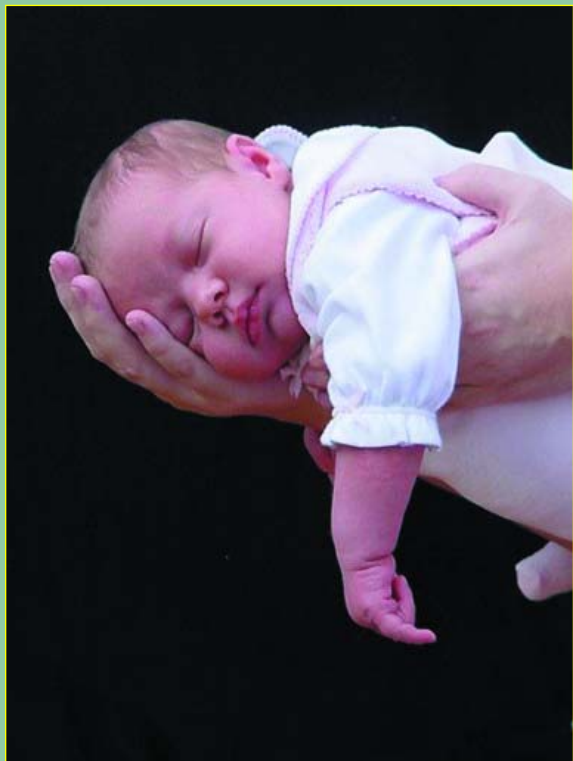


Donna S. Parson, Social Services case manager, Appling County DFCS
"Telling Secrets,' my granddaughters at 3 months old."



Theresa Tufano, program assistant, Central Intake and Evaluation, MHDDAD
"Cat drinking from faucet."





Heather Robinson, Barrow County DFCS
 “My daughter Haley.”



Rhonda Harris, LPN, Child Health, Ware County Health Department
 “Sydney Strickland, age 8.”



Angela Hollander, FICM supervisor, Henry County DFCS
 “‘Day dreaming,’ my son Daniel playing on some Harleys at a friend's wedding.”



Gail Pierce, Clerk II, Toombs County Health Department
 “My cat Rascal wrapped in an afghan.”





Dena J. Smith, Press Secretary, Office of Communications
 “'Rise and Fall,' former site of Grady Homes housing development, Atlanta.”



Barbara Gaston, nurse manager,
 Dooly County Health Department
 “'Orange burst,' zinnia.”



Jane Perry, program manager, Chemical
 Hazards Program, PH
 “Over 13,000 barrels of hazardous waste were
 found abandoned at a facility in South DeKalb
 County. As cleanup continues by EPA, the
 Chemical Hazards Program will assess the
 potential for human exposure.”



Tracie Al'Belar, training coordinator,
 MHDDAD
 “Dalkey Harbour, County Dublin, Ireland.”



Star Staff Honored by DHR and Georgia Merit System

Barbara Joye

DHR honored outstanding staff at our annual Employee Recognition reception in Atlanta May 2. This event took place in conjunction with the Georgia Merit System's (GMS) fifth annual Public Employee Recognition Week, which honored state employees across Georgia during National Public Service Week May 1-7. DHR award winners also received three of GMS' seven statewide awards, more than in any year since the awards program began

in 2001. GMS selects winners from among nominees submitted by all of Georgia's state agencies.

DHR's awards program was organized by the Office of Human Resource Management and Development (OHRMD) and supported by all of DHR's divisions and offices. "I am delighted that so many of our star staff were also recognized at the state level," says OHRMD Director **Rosa Waymon**. "All of the winners are wonderful role models for doing the right work in the right way as we provide resources to Georgia's children and families. This awards program is just one way we show our appreciation for their hard work. Thanks to everyone who submitted nominations."

Brenda E. Crawford, director of the Fannin County office of the Division of Family and Children Services (DFCS), received a Leadership award in recognition of her work in behalf of Fannin County children and families. She serves in a leadership role on the Fannin County Family Connection's Meth Task Force; helps plan the annual Fannin County Community Service Conference; and helps organize an annual candlelight vigil and silent walk to raise public awareness of child abuse and the contributions of Fannin County DFCS' Child Protective Services caseworkers.

Prevent Child Abuse Georgia gave Crawford its 2005 Volunteer of the Year award for her dedication to Prevent Child



These winners of the 2006 DHR Employee Recognition Awards also won statewide awards from the Georgia Merit System: (L to R) **Will Woods, Carlos Williams, Magon Mbadugha, Minnie Lindsey, Rickey Dorsey, Linda Hernandez, Deborah Luckie, and Bill Krysak**. Not shown: **Alison Alexander, Rochelle Dillon**.

Abuse Fannin. She also chairs or serves on several other committees and boards that address issues such as domestic violence, child abuse, child fatality, and truancy.

Minnie Lindsey, an Employment Services case manager for Fulton County DFCS, won the Customer Service award from both DHR and GMS for her work helping recipients of Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) find employment. Her unique contribution was creating an innovative "clothing closet" so TANF recipients could be appropriately dressed for job interviews or their first days at work. She organized a clothing drive among DFCS staff that was so successful that a special room had to be equipped to hold all the outfits, shoes and accessories collected. When Hurricane Katrina evacuees arrived in Fulton County she expanded the service to include clothes for men and children and children's toys. She often washed and ironed the clothes herself. At the same time she worked with other staff to maintain an average 62.3 percent work participation rate for TANF recipients and helped 27 people find jobs during 2005.

Magon Mbadugha, a dietician who directs the Division of Public Health's Diabetes Prevention and Control Program and Drive for Sight Program, earned the Community Service award from both DHR and GMS for her work organizing and directing

Continued on Page 9



Star Staff Continued

the Health Ministry of the Assemblies of God Tabernacle in Decatur. The ministry focuses on prevention and intervention for major chronic diseases and conditions.

Mbadugha organized two CPR courses and conducted numerous educational programs during evenings and weekends to help people control Type 2 diabetes and other conditions in a variety of settings, including the Bridal Temple in Stone Mountain. She also completed a workshop on physical inactivity and disease for support group participants in the DeKalb Extension Service' Diabetes Today program and she organized a Saturday exercise and nutrition education program to help people control obesity and adopt new health behaviors. Finally, in 2005 she and her team gave away 300 articles of clothing and 1,000 pounds of food and helped hundreds of people find services such as a medical home, jobs and other resources.

Merender Turner, a family service worker for Carroll County DFCS, received the Humanitarian award in recognition of her work in behalf of a Carroll County family going through a medical crisis, beyond the requirements of her job. When a young mother of three with Hodgkin's Disease required a stem cell transplant Turner coordinated many services for the family, including childcare, housing, emergency dental care, transportation and medical liaison services. She spent every weekend and sometimes weekdays by the mother's side at the hospital for five months, traveling an hour or two each way. She also became a surrogate mother for the children, one of whom had developed mental health problems. The mother, who had not been expected to live beyond September 2005, is now home and doing well.

The Office of Human Resource Management and Development's (OHRMD) Recruitment and Selection Services Team won the Innovation award from both DHR and GMS for implementing a streamlined hiring process for Metro Atlanta counties that enabled them to hire 500 new DFCS caseworkers in nine months.

Previously, county DFCS managers had to recruit and screen all applicants, which created delays in filling key staff positions. Caseloads and staff turnover were high, hampering DFCS' ability to protect children and strengthen families. Instead, team members **Bill Krysak, Alison Alexander, Rochelle Dillon, Linda Hernandez, Rickey Dorsey, Deborah Luckie, Carlos Williams, and Will Woods** streamlined the initial application process and recruited and

screened all applicants. A team of DFCS staff from Metro counties then interviewed high quality candidates at a central location. Those selected received a job offer and, if they accepted, a background check before leaving the building. This saved the county offices staff time and speeded up their ability to fill vacant positions and thus lower caseloads. The team also won the statewide Innovations award.

Honorable mentions were awarded to **Joann Aaron**, Houston County DFCS (Customer Service); **Mellie Golden**, Carroll County DFCS (Humanitarian); **Belinda Gandy**, Southwestern State Hospital (Innovations); and **Janelle Steedley**, Waycross Office of Child Support Services (Leadership).

Did you know?

- Last year 600 foster children had summer jobs through the Teenwork program that pays at least minimum wage.
 - Sixteen thousand seniors receive services from the Community Care Services Program. Fifty-five percent of these seniors are over 75 years of age. Last year the program served 184 people over age 100.
 - One-third of our foster children are ages 13-18 (4,834 children). Last year 691 foster kids turned 18. Four hundred and sixty-eight 18-year-olds left foster care.
 - The HALT Tuberculosis education and outreach campaign is helping to reduce the incidence of tuberculosis in our state. We have reduced the number of tuberculosis cases in our state 44 percent since the peak year of 1991.
 - Sixty-five percent of people who come into the child protection system already have a food stamp case. The overlap in the DFCS child welfare and family independence populations is 80 percent. That is the reason both sides of the DFCS "house" are working closer together.
 - MHDDAD's Project Hope has provided counseling and outreach services to 11,000 Katrina evacuees.
-



State Ombudsman sings at Carnegie Hall

Edna Jackson



How do you get to Carnegie Hall? Just ask **Becky Kurtz**, the state long-term care ombudsman who sings second alto in the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra (ASO) Chorus. Kurtz performed with the chorus in a concert at Carnegie Hall in New York City on March 11. *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution* said the chorus “sounded like the most formidable in the world” as it performed Verdi's Requiem. They received a standing ovation.

“It was absolutely thrilling and exciting to sing in such a place that is so prestigious and well respected in the music world,” said Kurtz. “I had lived in New York for a few years so it was also fun to have some of my old friends in the audience. But, by far the most exciting part is the music we can make in that hall. Carnegie Hall has phenomenal acoustics. On stage, we in the chorus can hear each other, the soloists, and the orchestra in ways that we cannot in Atlanta's Symphony Hall. When we hear each other we can create a more unified sound. It not only makes more beautiful music, but also provides better communication of the music through us to the audience.”

This was Kurtz's third performance at Carnegie with the ASO Chorus, which is made up of 200 volunteer singers who have to re-audition every year. They are separate from the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra, which consists of paid professionals. Sometimes the chorus sings with the Orchestra, but not always.

Kurtz began singing in choruses in 1977 while attending Eastern Mennonite High School in Harrisonburg, Virginia. She also sings solo. Her formal training includes voice lessons in high school, college and graduate school. She still receives vocal training occasionally.

Her family, which is Mennonite, all enjoy singing *a capella*. Four-part singing is very important at every worship service and even some social gatherings among Mennonites. Her father, Elam Kurtz, is a retired physician and a trained soloist who performs frequently as a hobby.

Inside DHR Continued from page 2

your own contact information instantly — unlike Groupwise. Also, when you bring up the intranet home page on your computer you will find a special link to your own division's or office's intranet pages, once you have registered using the employee directory.

The intranet's home page includes links to three important information sources:










Features formerly available through OHRMD's pages, such as information about benefits, personnel forms, open enrollment, and training opportunities, are linked from the intranet's “Employee Resources” page.

Also from Employee Resources is a direct link to the PeopleSoft employee self-service application where you can look up your own paycheck stubs and W2 forms, find your leave totals, update your personal emergency contact information, and more.

“Technical Resources” provides links to OIT's help desk, information about purchasing equipment and software, and a list of current OIT projects.

Finally, “Publications” has links to all the reports, manuals and newsletters we produce and need to share, including the *Human Side*.

Available in the employee directory are organizational charts linked to the directory listings, so you can see who the person you are contacting reports to and his or her work unit. If you have any ideas about what else you'd like to see on “Inside DHR,” contact dlhrwebmaster@dlhr.state.ga.us. The “Inside DHR” slogan is “for employees, by employees.”



THE HUMAN SIDE

The purpose of The Human Side is to provide interesting and important information related to DHR employees and their jobs.

Published by the DHR Office of Communications
Dena Smith, press secretary.

Managing editor
Barbara Joye

Please send your letters and story ideas to :
The Human Side
2 Peachtree Street NW, Suite 29.426, Atlanta, GA 30303

or call 404/657-1385; or FAX 404-651-6815; or
DHR GroupWise email: brjoye@dlhr.state.ga.us;
or Internet: brjoye@dlhr.state.ga.us.



DHR Wins Awards for Giving

Barbara Joye

DHR won a Commissioner's Award for contributing the second highest amount per person to the 2005-6 State Charitable Contributions Program (SCCP) in the category for agencies with over 9,000 employees. University of Georgia staff gave the most per employee in that category. DHR has won a Commissioner's Award each year for the past six years. DHR also won a Governor's Award for increasing our total contributions over last year's by \$28,911.

DHR employees gave a total of \$281,264 to the 2005-6 charity drive, with 16.2 percent participation. SCCP donations benefit some 1,200 nonprofit community organizations and charities. Contributions from all state agencies totaled \$2.5 million.

"I am proud that DHR continues to be recognized for our contributions to so many organizations that help Georgia's families and communities," said DHR Commissioner **B. J. Walker**. "I hope to see 100 percent participation in the 2006-7 campaign."

Khari Hunt, director of the Project Management Office, chaired DHR's drive and **Linda Parker** of the Office of Human Resources Management and Development served as coordinator.



Andrew Miller and **Susie Johnson Rhoden** of Public Health (second and third from left) and DHR's 2005-6 State Charitable Contributions Campaign campaign coordinator **Linda Parker** of the Office of Human Resources Management and Development (holding plaque) accept the Commissioner's Award from the statewide campaign coordinator, Department of Juvenile Justice Commissioner **Albert Murray** (far left), and Georgia Merit System Commissioner **Wayne St. Claire** (far right).

WHO'S NEWS



In March **Cindy R. Moss** was named director of the Office of Child Support Services (OCSS). She had served as deputy director of OCSS (formerly Office of Child Support Enforcement) since November 2005 and as director of state operations for the agency since 2003.

During the past three years Moss led the development of numerous applications of innovative technology, including the interactive Constituent Services Portal and a prize-winning State Disbursement Unit that receives and distributes all child support payments in Georgia. Governor Perdue honored her

for providing exemplary customer service, at Georgia's first Customer Service Summit held in January 2006. The National Child Support Enforcement Association honored Moss for "outstanding individual achievement" last year. In 2004 Moss received the Department of Human Resources' Leadership Award and was runner-up for the Georgia Merit System's statewide Leadership Award.

Moss began her career with OCSS in 1987, rising from the position of agent to manager of several local offices, then moved to the state office where she served as Financial Customer Service Unit manager and program director before becoming director of state operations. She earned a B.A. in business administration from the University of Georgia and a M.B.A. from the University of West Georgia.





Westlynn Benton, Child Protective Services supervisor for Forsyth County DFCS, was recently named an outstanding Master of Social Work student in the part-time program at University of Georgia (UGA)-Gwinnett. Candidates for this award are selected by individual professors based on class performance and commitment to the social work field. (L to R) Rufus Larkin, PhD., professor of social work, UGA; Westlynn Benton, and Paula Simmons, administrative coordinator, UGA-Gwinnett.

Paul A. Blake, M.D., MPH recently retired state epidemiologist, received the 2006 Sellers-McCroan Award for his work in establishing one of the nation's outstanding epidemiology offices. Beginning with a staff of five, he successfully recruited and secured funding for a five-section branch of over 100 epidemiologists and support staff within the Division of Public Health (PH). During 1996-97, he was instrumental in Georgia's selection to receive funding as one of the CDC's first elite Emerging Infections Program sites. "As a result of Dr. Blake's work over the past ten years, Georgians are safer and healthier," said PH Director **Stuart Brown, M.D.** The Sellers-McCroan award, jointly sponsored by PH and the Georgia Public Health Association, recognizes outstanding achievement and service to Georgians in the fields of epidemiology and/or laboratory science.

In January Division of Family and Children Services (DFCS) Policy Specialist **Millicent Houston** received the Josephine Baker Award for Excellence in Georgia Foster Care from Miss/Ms. Black Georgia USA. She was honored for her previous work as Independent Living Coordinator. The organization presented Houston with an original work of art and will donate 100 hours of community service to a foster care organization of her choice.

GeorgiaCares Director **Jennie D. Deese** was recently selected to serve on the National Senior Medicare Patrol Stakeholders Committee, which will focus on strategic issues and help the federal Administration on Aging develop a new complaint management and tracking system. GeorgiaCares is designed to educate seniors and help them apply for all available low-cost prescription drug assistance programs. Included in GeorgiaCares is Georgia's State Health Insurance Assistance Program (SHIP) and the Senior Medicare Patrol program.

Faye Bridges, a social services case manager for Twiggs County DFCS, was named Case Manager of the Year by the Adoptive and Foster Parent Association of Georgia at their annual conference in March. She was nominated by some of the Twiggs County adoptive and foster parents she serves. "I love working with the families in Twiggs County," Bridges said when she accepted the award. "My motto is that I treat my foster and adoptive families like my own family. I don't feel like I own my job, I feel like I earn it by how I work with my clients. I feel honored to do the job I do for DFCS."

WHAT'S NEWS

Recently DHR received national recognition for suggesting an innovation that helped people who evacuated to Georgia and other states in the wake of last fall's hurricanes to maintain access to their food stamp benefits even if they no longer had their Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) cards. The **Office of Financial Services' EBT team** brainstormed with the **Division of Family and Children Services Food Stamp Unit** and the **EBT representative from the Office of Information Technology** to develop procedures that could be used by food retailers. The "relaxed" key entry procedures, adopted by the United States Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Services (USDA/FNS), allowed the retailers to complete an EBT purchase when customers from hurricane-affected areas had only their card number and PIN.

"The relaxed key entry procedures became one of the most utilized policies by states that had been affected by hurricanes Katrina, Rita and Wilma," said Mandy Briggs, EBT Branch chief of USDA's Food Stamp Program, at the national FNS EBT Directors' Conference in May. "We appreciate the concept for the procedures as it was a creative solution to an unfolding problem. . . Please keep the good ideas coming!"





The Mom's Club of Cumming SW, Aberdeen Women's Club, and the Forsyth County Child Advocacy Center gave Forsyth County DFCS case managers generous donations of spring baskets for the children on their caseloads. The baskets contain candy, toys, toiletries and personal care items. This community partnership has become an annual event. (L to R) Christy Palmer, Mom's Club of Cumming SW; **Carol Moses**, program administrator, Forsyth County DFCS; **Tulia Amison** and **Tammy Kennedy**, Forsyth County DFCS; Kerry Keough, president, Mom's Club of Cumming SW.

The **Georgia Certified Peer Specialist Program**, an initiative of the Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities and Addictive Diseases, was named an "innovative and exceptional practice" by the Annapolis Coalition on the Behavioral Health Workforce, an organization that works to improve recruitment, retention, training and education in mental health and substance abuse treatment. The Peer Specialist program was featured in the Registry of Innovative Practices in Workforce Development. Certified Peer Specialists help other MHDDAD consumers return to their communities through employment and mutual supports, and by helping them take charge of their wellness through self-directed recovery. Georgia's 285 Peer Specialists have helped 7,200 people.

In April the Office of Child Support Enforcement changed its name to the **Office of Child Support Services**, to reflect its focus on customer service. "It's time for our agency's name to emphasize our mission, which is to serve children and families," says OCSS Director **Cindy Moss**. "We've spent the past few years working very hard on ways to make it easier for parents to use our services through the use of innovative technology and better staff utilization. Enforcing support orders continues to be a big part of our work, because the payments make a big difference for children and help many families stay self-sufficient, but we do so much more. In fact, over half of the custodial parents we serve don't need enforcement of their cases at all, because they receive regular payments."

The Division of Public Health was selected from among 12,000 entries as a Bronze Telly Award winner, honoring its **Hear Act Learn Treat (HALT) Tuberculosis Now** campaign's community outreach video. The Telly Award is the nation's premier award honoring outstanding local, regional and cable television commercials and programs, as well as the finest video and film productions. Only two levels of awards are given, Silver and Bronze.

The Division of Public Health's campaign "**The Race to Defeat Cancer: The 2005 Dodge Tour de Georgia Live Healthy Georgia Expo**," won an Award of Excellence in the Public Relations Society of America's (PRSA) Silver Anvil awards competition in the category of Special Observances and Events (less than seven days). Silver Anvil awards are given each year to organizations that successfully addressed a contemporary issue with exemplary professional skill, creativity and resourcefulness. The campaign also won a Phoenix award in the same category from the PRSA's Georgia chapter.

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recognized the achievements of two Division of Public Health programs. The CDC awarded the division's **Diabetes Control Program** a Certificate of Recognition for meeting the Healthy People 2010 target for increasing the percentage of people with diabetes whose levels of Hemoglobin A1C (HbA1c) were screened at least twice last year. Healthy People 2010 is a set of national health promotion and disease prevention objectives developed by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. HbA1c screening monitors blood glucose levels of people with diabetes so treatment can be adjusted as necessary to avoid complications of the disease.

In addition, a CDC-commissioned study of the Division of Public Health's **Stroke and Heart Attack Prevention (SHAPP) Program** found it to be both effective and cost-efficient. SHAPP provides stroke and heart attack prevention services for 15,000 Georgians who are low-income and either uninsured or underinsured. Services include screening and case management through county health departments; referral to doctors and treatment; and medications at low or no cost. The study found that SHAPP was less costly and resulted in better health outcomes than either no treatment or the treatment typically received in the private sector.

